

Comparative Analysis of Parent - Child Relationship, Parental Stress, and Coping Strategies among Employed and Unemployed Mothers of Preschoolers

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Abstract: *This study aims to evaluate the perceived parental stress, parent - child relationship, and coping mechanisms among working and non - working mothers of pre - schoolers. A total of 150 participants from different cities of the Kozhikode district, Kerala, were selected. The study utilized the Parental Stress Scale developed by Berry and Jones 1995, the Coping Scale by Hampy and Grych 2015, and the Pianta Parent Child Relationship Scale by Robert C. Pianta 1992. The results revealed a significant relationship between parent - child relationship and coping in both working and non - working mothers. However, there was no significant relationship between parent - child relationship and parental stress. The study also found a significant relationship between parental stress and coping in non - working mothers, but not in working mothers. The findings suggest that higher coping strategies result in better parent - child relationships.*

Keywords: Parental stress, parent child relationship and coping

1. Introduction

The millennial period has witnessed a lot of changes in the current world among this parenting has also taken its own color. The journey of parenthood is beautiful from watching the child taking first foot steps to graduating in college one of the most important benefits of parenting is the opportunity to establish a close, meaningful relationship with another individual. **The parent - child relationship (PCR)** is one of the most crucial and complex relationships in human life. It starts from the child's birth and continues throughout the lifespan, impacting the child's physical, emotional, and social development Parenting can be a rewarding experience that brings joy and satisfaction, but it can also be challenging and stressful at times like winding road of emotion. **Parental stress (PS)** refers to the emotional and physical strain that parents experience as they try to meet the demands of parenting. Parental stress can arise from a variety of factors, including financial pressures, marital conflict, child behaviour problems, and lack of social support. (jennings, 2009) It can lead to negative consequences for both parents and children, such as depression, anxiety, physical health problems, and poor academic and social outcomes for children thus this study can serve to cause awareness among the parents about the importance of parent child relationship. Parenthood is not always easy, and there are certainly moments of stress, frustration, and even sadness. However, even in the midst of these difficult times, the joy of parenthood can still shine through. When parents are able to overcome challenges and work together to support their child, they often come out on the other side with a renewed sense of joy and appreciation for the bond that they share.

Another factor that's been studied here is coping. **Coping (CP)** is a psychological concept that refers to the process by which Individuals deal with stressful events or situations. It encompasses the cognitive, behavioural, and emotional strategies that people use to manage, reduce, or tolerate the demands and challenges of life. The study is conducted in working and non - working mothers of pre - schoolers as the maternal love is the bond between a mother and her child. This bond is formed through a combination of biological and environmental factors, including the release of hormones such as oxytocin, which is often referred to as the "love hormone." Oxytocin is released during childbirth and breastfeeding, and has been shown to play a critical role in the formation of maternal behaviour. It helps to promote feelings of trust, affection, and bonding between a mother and her child. According to the self - determination hypothesis developed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan in 1985, individuals can become self - determined when their demands for autonomy, connection, and competence are met.

The feeling of connectedness has to begin from the parent child relationship in order to build a self - determined individual. Maternal love also plays an important role in the development of social skills and emotional intelligence. Children who receive emotional support from their mothers are more likely to develop empathy and social skills, which are critical for building healthy relationships throughout life. They are also more likely to develop emotional intelligence, which allows them to understand and regulate their own emotions, as well as the emotions of others. (Javadifar, 2016)

2. Literature Survey

Rajgariah et al conducted research on Parenting Stress and Coping Strategies Adopted among Working and Non - Working Mothers It is a cross - sectional study conducted among women visiting immunization clinics who are employed or unemployed. Data on Socio - Demographic Variables, Parenting Stress (Parenting Stress Scale) And Coping Strategies (Cope Inventory) adopted was obtained through a self - administered, validated questionnaire and analysed using SPSS V.24. Result showed that 13% of non - working women and 26% of working women experienced high parenting stress. (Rajgariah et al., 2021)

Song et al conducted a research on Parenting Stress Changes in both Working and Non - Working Mothers after the Birth of Their First Child using the Korea Institute of Child Care and Education (KICCE). The results showed that the parenting stress of the non - working mothers was higher than the stress experienced by the working mothers. An increase in stress was found in both groups between the second year and the third year of childbirth. The total explanatory power of the knowledge, values and expectations regarding their children saw stress increase for the working mothers, but saw it decrease for the non - working mothers (Song et al., 2014)

Jarvis and Creasey conducted a study on Parental Stress, Coping, and Attachment in Families with 18 - Month - Old Infant. Relationship between parenting stress and attachment for 32 families consisting of a mother, father, and their 18 - month - old infant was analyzed using The Attachment Q - Set, Parenting Stress Index, and Ways of Coping. Result showed that parenting stress was significantly associated with insecure attachment to mothers and fathers. The result showed that psychological separation due to stress more than actual physical separation is a salient variable in explaining the impact of child care on the relationship between infants and their parents. (Jarvis & Creasey, 1991)

Nelson et. al examined relationship between Mothers Daily Work, Home, Relationship Stress with Characteristics of Mother Child Interactions, using a measure developed by Nelson et. al. 142 mothers were analysed for the same. Results showed parental stress work stress and daily stress i. e., managing multiple roles average romantic relationship stress was the most important unique contributor to mother-child relationship (Nelson et al., 2017)

Jiun et al. Conducted a study to examine the Relationship between Parenting Stress and Perceived Children's Social Problem Behaviour in Chinese Mothers. The sample comprises of 100 Chinese working mothers. The sampling technique cluster sampling methods. The Eyberg Child Behaviour Inventory and the Parenting Stress Index - Short Form were used to measure parenting stress and social issue behaviour in children, respectively. The result revealed that parenting stress is significantly positive correlated with perceived children social problem behaviour. (Jiun et al., 2016)

Problem Definition

To study parental stress, parent child relationship and coping in working and non - working mothers of pre - schoolers.

3. Methodology

Parental stress was measured using Parental Stress Scale developed by Berry and Jones (1995), coping was measured using (Coping Scale) by Hampy and Grych published in 2015 and Pianta Parent Child Relationship Scale by Robert c. Pianta 1992 was used to obtain the measure of parent child relationship. The research design of quantitative correlational survey method was used 150 participants were chosen through convenient sampling method Spearman Correlational analysis, Mann Whitney U test and regression analysis was used to analyse the data.

4. Result and discussion

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of scores on Parent child relationship, parental stress and coping

Variable	M	SD	n	
PCR				
Working mothers	35.21	4.987	150	
Non - working mothers	37.59	4.526		
PS				
Working mothers	52.13	15.631		
Non - working mothers	37.61	12.265		
CP				
Working mothers	29.07	8.847		
Non - working mothers	36.09	7.646		

The above table shows the descriptive statistics of the variables parent child relationship, parental stress and coping. The mean of parent child relationship in working mothers and non - working mothers is found to be 35.21 and 37.59 indicating the selected sample has poor parent child relationship. The mean of parental stress in working mothers of pre - schoolers is found to be 52.13 indicating a moderate level of parental stress and the mean of parental stress in non - working mothers of toddlers is found to be 37.61 which is relatively low level of parental stress. The mean 29.07 and 36.09 of coping in working and non - working mothers of pre - scholars is found to be average.

Table 2: Spearman correlation test of parental stress, parent child relationship and coping in working and non - working mothers

Variable	n	M	SD	1	2	3
PCR						
Working mothers	75	35.21	4.987	-		
Non - working mothers	75	37.59	4.526	-		
PS						
Working mothers	75	52.13	15.631	.000	-	
Non - working mothers	75	37.61	12.265	.000	-	
CP						
Working mothers	75	29.07	7.646	.032	.000	-
Non - working mothers	75	36.09	8.847	.314	.156	-

$P > 0.05$

The above table shows the spearman rank correlation of variables, significant value of parent child relationship with parental stress is .000 which indicates there is no significant relationship between parent child relationship and parental

stress in working and non - working mothers of pre - schoolers. In contrast a study conducted on Parental Stress, Coping and Attachment in Families with 18 - Month - Old Infant by Jarvis & Creasey in 1991 shows a significant relationship between parental stress and parent child relationship, high parental stress resulted in insecure parent child relationship (Jarvis & Creasey, 1991) .

The present study showed a significant value.032 in working mothers and.314 in non - working mothers of parent child relationship with coping indicating a significant relationship between parent child relationship and coping. A study by Jing Wang et al, on the mediating role of coping strategies between depression and social support and the moderating effect of the parent-child relationship in college students returning to school: During the period of the regular prevention and control of COVID - 19. showed that the parent-child relationship moderated the relationship between social support and negative coping and also social support has an impact on depression during the pandemic of COVID - 19 through the mediating role of coping style and the moderating effect of the parent-child relationship. (Wang et al., 2023) . The significant value of parental stress with coping in working mothers is.000 indicating that there is no significant relationship between the variables parental stress and coping in working mothers and the significant value.156 indicates a significant relationship between parental stress and coping in nonworking mothers. A study conducted by Lopez et. al on Parental Stress and Coping in Families of Children With and Without Developmental Delays showed that parents of children with developmental delays experienced increased levels of parental stress and the experience of stress is dependent on the coping strategies used (Lopez et. al, 2008). The result of Mann Whitney U test of the variables Parent child relationship, parental stress and coping shows the p value of parent child relationship as 0.003 which indicates that there is a significant difference in parent child relationship of working and non - working mothers. A study by Hoffman, L. W on Effects of maternal employment on the child showed that in school - age children there is no evidence for a theory of deprivation resulting from maternal employment, but adequate data are not yet available on the effects of maternal employment on the infant (Hoffman, 1974) .

The p value for parental stress is.000 indicating there is no significant difference in parental stress of working and non - working mothers. Deborah Kirby Forgays et al conducted a study on Parenting Stress in Employed and At - Home Mothers in Italy.174 employed and unemployed mothers in Italy was chosen for the same. Results showed the strength of the relationship between parenting stress and Type A Behaviour Pattern varies in mothers due to maternal work status and parenting stress domain (Forgays et al., 2001) . The p value of coping between working and non - working mothers is.000 indicating that there is no significant difference in coping of working and non - working mothers. The linear regression analysis which indicates the impact of coping on parent child relationship and coping in working and non - working mothers of pre - schoolers shows that R^2 value 0.71 indicates 71 % of parent child relationship is explained by coping. There is significant evidence to conclude that the regression model fits the data. A study by

Philipp Yorck Herzber on Coping in Relationships: the interplay between individual and dyadic coping and their effects on relationship satisfaction in 240 German couples also showed that the dyadic coping is stronger predictor of relationship satisfaction than individual coping, and that it mediates the individual coping efforts. (Herzberg, 2013)

5. Conclusion

The results revealed that there is a significant relationship between parent child relationship and coping in working and nonworking mothers of pre - schoolers. However, there is no significant relationship between parent child relationship and parental stress in both working and non - working mothers of pre - schoolers. The result also showed a significant relationship between parental stress and coping in non - working mothers of pre - schoolers but there is no significant relationship between parental stress and coping in working mothers of pre - schoolers. The Mann Whitney U test showed a significant difference in the parent child relationship of working and non - working mothers of pre - schoolers, non - working mothers had better parent child relationship than working mothers. There is no significant difference in parental stress and coping in working and non - working mothers of pre - schoolers. The regression analysis shows the influence of coping in parent child relationship, higher coping has resulted in better parent child relationship.

6. Future Scope

Limitations of the study

- The study was conducted in a localized area Kozhikode, Kerala
- The study was based on a self - report questionnaire so there might be response bias which cannot be ignored.
- The accessibility of samples was spare.
- The study did not consider the demographic variables
- The study was conducted in a time bound thus deeper analysis was not done.

Suggestion for the study

- The study can be conducted including the socio-demographic details.
- The study can be further explored by including samples from different location.
- Response bias can be eradicated by including interview method along with the questionnaires.

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